

The Mighty Douche

Kris King – September 21st 2013

<http://www.rantinaminor.co.uk/2013/09/the-mighty-douche/>

Yes, yes ... I **know** ... it's been six whole months since my last blog post and you've been worrying yourself sick all that time, not knowing how you should think about certain things, or whether I would ever be around again to offer your lives a much needed injection of wisdom and humour that you're frankly unable to formulate for yourselves. Well, fear not, for I have risen, out of the ashes (well, out of the ramshackle spare room studio playing host to my band's noise-making activities for most of the past year) and ready to deliver some righteous word-mangling into your eager eye-boxes that they might electrically tickle those parts of your brain responsible for giggling like a loony or getting into a Daily Mail-style froth at what a giant pile of steaming arse this world can be from time to time. As is so often the case, it all begins with an argument on Twitter ...

Yes, I know, another Twitter argument, quelle surprise! Kris spends valuable seconds of his rapidly dwindling, yet moderately fabulous, existence swearing at theists in discrete packets of 140 characters or less. Isn't there something else you should be getting on with? Don't you have rats to tend to, a band to record songs for, or a gorgeous boyfriend to annoy with your presence? Well, no, actually – having discharged my responsibilities, and with my better half up to his elbows in neon tetras and algae-cleaning gear, I had a brief amount of spare time in which to get myself called a disrespectful gobshite by whatever over-sensitive theist was "offended" by my sarcastic, yet ultimately malice-free, ridiculing of their most cherished spiritual beliefs. This time, however, I was surprised to see that one accusation of douchebaggery had come from someone claiming to be an atheist, a development which briefly troubled me; have I become an obnoxious troll, mocking people, and generally being a colossal dick to see what sort of reaction I get?

After considering the question for a while (although, not for too long – I do have a gorgeous boyfriend to annoy with my presence, after all), I was relieved to arrive at the reasonable conclusion that the answer is a fairly straightforward "no". Now, it shouldn't surprise you in the slightest that my extraordinarily-biased thought-processes led me down the "not being an irritating cock-wallet" road but, unlike the countless times that Jeremy Clarkson has attempted to drive down the same highway, I can at least demonstrate fairly comprehensively why I am not only right to take this particular route but also that you should consider joining me for the ride. And, as if that wasn't enough, I can even persuade you that we should take the trip in a tank in order that we may flatten Clarkson into an irritating dick-hole pancake (along with whatever supercharged twat-mobile he's currently using as a feeble substitute for his genitalia).

So, why do I do it? Actually, back up a second, we've missed a bit ... what is it *exactly* that I do? Well, it's not something that I often go out of my way to engage in but, every so often, my interest is piqued by some barely literate, often incoherent, expression of abject stupidity regarding science, faith, the existence of god, spirituality, etc. on Twitter (whether it's a re-tweet by someone I follow or my having just decided to see what kind of grade-A twonks had been repeatedly bashing themselves over the head with the christ-hammer under the #TeamJesus or #TeamGod hash tags). As a British person with the standard-issue British person's sense of humour (and all that that entails) I will, invariably, feel the irrepressible urge to rip the ever-loving piss out of whatever helping of twaddle the theist has decided to serve up to the internet community at that moment. Often it will be sarcastic, sometimes childish, occasionally outright dismissive, frequently ironic, or, for the most part, just plain silly, but it is never malicious or calculated to wound.

What am I hoping to achieve out of this? Well, apart from the fact that everyone's got to have a hobby (and taking the piss out of something is one of the few pleasures I have in life that doesn't shorten my lifespan or shrink my clothes), this is another area where I depart from your basic troll because I actually **do** have a reason for doing it that goes beyond simply fapping like a gibbon at my own ability to upset random strangers. In a nutshell, I just want people to see the inherent silliness of their beliefs; I want to bring the ludicrous, ridiculous inanity of religious faith out into the daylight so that it can be seen for what it is. I don't do it just "for the lulz"; I don't set out to upset or offend

people, although that does occasionally happen; I just enjoy pointing out that, no matter how much they mean to you, no matter how much you want them to be true, your bronze-age religious beliefs are really fucking stupid.

"Ah-ha!", you exclaim, "So far you've skilfully acquitted yourself of troll status, but that last comment exposes you for the hooting, internet twat-badger you are! Ha-ha! I win!". Nice try, but no Jaffa Cakes for you ... what you've done there is confused being dick for lacking respect; the two are **not** the same. It is perfectly possible to be a respectful dick, or to simply lack respect and not be a total bell-end about it. I, for instance, do not respect Gary Glitter's opinion that, in possessing child porn or fucking young teens, he has "done nothing wrong"; does that make me a knob? No, of course not, because we recognise that respect for anyone, or anything, should be based on merit. Does it *deserve* our respect? And, if not, aren't we affording it a dangerous measure of power over us if we continue to respect it out of sheer politeness? Imagine people saying of Glitter, "Well, he did have a hard-drive full of kiddie porn, but we shouldn't criticise him because it would be terribly rude". Fuck. That.

I have no obligation to respect *anyone's* beliefs. **None** of us do. Your beliefs, whatever they are, are not automatically entitled to respect simply because you hold them; I don't care how fervently you defend them, how "true" they are to you, or how strongly you feel others should treat them as precious as you do, your beliefs will get our respect if they've earned it. You certainly have my respect when it comes to the *right* to believe because that is something worthy of respect; it's your head, and you can run whatever the hell sequence of neural impulses through the squishy part of it as you see fit. But that doesn't mean we have to coo over them like we're placating a child whose demented crayon scribbles of a family he insists is yours (but who look more like Mr Messy and his kin as re-imagined by Tim Burton on mescaline) should receive pride of place on the fridge door. By giving unquestioned respect to religious belief, we are patronising it, maybe even infantilising it.

Worse than the idea that we are treating a belief like a highly-strung, stropy, and entitled child is the fact that, when undue respect is given, we are making a conscious decision to place something beyond criticism. You only need imagine the disastrous consequences of taking the Gary Glitter example to its logical conclusion as to why this is **always** a very bad idea. Now, you might be thinking that it's grossly unfair, perhaps even disgusting, for me to compare the sexual abuse of children with the belief in a supernatural deity; if that is what you are, in fact, thinking, then I have two words for you: Catholic Church (actually, I have more than two words for you, but the phrase "I have an indeterminate number of words for you, although I'd like to initially emphasis two very specific ones" isn't quite as punchy). If you're thinking, even for a moment, that your religious beliefs should somehow be exempt from scrutiny or attack, I've got three words for you: fuck right off.

I have a right to criticise, as do we all, and those we target have a right to defend themselves against criticism ... but they *don't* have the right to put themselves out of reach – nothing can ever truly be protected from criticism, and one should treat with absolute suspicion those who attempt to do so. Beliefs are not special, and they are not immune from attack. Beliefs inform our actions, affect every aspect of our behaviour, and that has consequences, not just on us but on others. Even if your beliefs are benign, I still reserve the right to slam them ... and, no, that **still** doesn't make me a dick. We cannot yield to demands for respect where it is not warranted, or where we simply don't feel that it has been earned of us, and we should never feel pressured to do so. As I said, if someone expects, or even demands, your respect without giving you adequate reason to award it, you should consider their intentions extremely dubious.

Okay, so, if not having respect for someone's beliefs doesn't make you a rancid little troll, surely mocking their beliefs does? Well, I'm sorry to inform those of you who possess stupid beliefs but the reality is that ridicule is a perfectly legitimate form of criticism. Granted it's not usually seen as the polite way to respond to suggestions that a talking snake told a rib-woman to disobey an unseen cloud-fairy who then had to torture his son to make a point to the rest of us, and that that's ultimately why gay people are evil, but it is certainly a *reasonable* thing to say when replying to such an absurdly nonsensical claim. After all, we each have the right to take the piss (regardless of whether or not that offends someone) because, at the end of the day, we may also lay claim to the inalienable right to offend people. You might not like it, but as you go through life you quickly learn that someone **will** eventually say something you don't like – it doesn't mean they're arseholes. You may have the right to be offended, and, holy shit, are some people quick to point out when they are, but you don't have a right to be prevented from ever being exposed to something that offends you.

"See, now you're just being an apologist for bullying". Really? So mockery is bullying now? Well, I

guess we better tear every comedy ever written straight out of the pages of history and feed them to the cat, because they're clearly just vehicles for abusing the vulnerable! Seriously, stop flailing around like a muppet with a vibrator in its poo-hole, and back the fuck up – by equating ridicule with abuse you serve only to insult the genuinely abused. Sure, bullying *can* take the form of mockery, but that's because mockery is a *tool*, and whether it's used to cause harm is down to who's wielding it. Where one person may use it to bully, another may use it to amuse, satirise, or highlight injustice, and to say that taking the piss out of someone is abuse is like saying that knives are murder; yeah, well, they're also dinner, wood-working, and fixing a toaster in direct violation of health and safety concerns (speaking of which, can we demand that "The Wright Way" never get another series or a chance to be repeated; not because it abuses the vulnerable, but because it's unutterably shit?)

I think the first person to introduce me to the idea that religion was a prime target for a damn good piss-ripping was Irish comedian Dave Allen, whom my dad loved (and still does). A self-described "practising atheist" despite, or more likely because of, a strict catholic schooling, Allen made religion a cornerstone of his material, mocking ritual more so than the actual beliefs themselves, but ultimately never being afraid to cause controversy by treating these revered institutions with far less respect than that to which they incorrectly felt entitled. And I **loved** it. He was phenomenal when it came to highlighting not only the hypocrisy of faith, but also the innate silliness of it all (although it was the latter that had a far greater effect on me at first, being a child – the funny man making fun of the funny men in funny hats was just undeniably, well, funny). Even when he wasn't commenting on religion itself he was able to puncture the pomposity of it by using it as the *setting* for a joke; watch the classic "[Did You Fart?](#)" and tell me that, without a single word being uttered, that's not ball-achingly hilarious.

A few years later I discovered one of the other big contributors to my complete lack of respect for religious faith, and the desire to extract the urine out of it at every available opportunity, "Monty Python's Flying Circus". If it wasn't sketches like "[The Bishop](#)" or the classic "[Spanish Inquisition](#)", it was the movie "Monty Python's Life Of Brian" that inspired in me a healthy cynicism and mocking attitude towards the insanely wacky beliefs held by many millions of people all over the world. In more recent years there has, of course, been the unparalleled "Father Ted", which dragged the catholic faith kicking and screaming into an alley and tickled the living stupid out of it until it begged for mercy. It never did, of course, which is why "Father Ted" is still awesome and the catholic church is still a global confederation of humourless bastards and child rape apologists who believe incredibly silly things.

"Who the hell are you to mock?" I hear you cry (not really, it's just a pointless rhetorical device). "Who are you to determine what's silly or ludicrous, especially when it comes to people's beliefs?!" Just to check, to make sure that we understand each other, but, you are kidding, right? It doesn't matter whether we see a belief as silly, or what we even mean by that – no matter what form our criticism takes, it must be recognised, it must be *acknowledged*. In any kind of public forum, whether it's on Twitter, evangelising in the street, or talking about your commitment to Jeebus with a gobby godless cousin at a family gathering, you should *always* be prepared to have your opinions challenged. Your stated views aren't entitled to privacy; if you get to express them, others get to counter them, and when you hold ridiculous beliefs as true you don't get to be all surprised when people ridicule them.

You may have noticed that this post covers similar ground to the previous one, that of the notion of religion being placed beyond criticism, mockery, and ridicule, and you're kind of right, although where that post deals specifically with the idea that beliefs are sacred and immune to attack this one asks whether or not engaging in such ridicule makes one a douchebag or not. Ultimately it comes down to how you go about it, and simply taking the piss doesn't really qualify; if it did, the comedy industry would be non-existent, with stand-ups playing to roomfuls of empty chairs as audiences around the world make it painfully clear how making fun of things and people and ideas frankly just isn't on! But since comedy is subjective, as individual senses of humour vary, let's take whether or not something is funny out of the equation and ask if the simple act of mocking a belief is inherently douchebaggy? Not really, no.

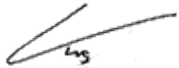
Where it **can** be is when you make it personal, when you make it about attacking the person themselves, rather than the belief; when your motivation is not to puncture the ideological balloon of theism, or the holding of questionable ideas up to scrutiny, but spite – when the belief is merely a stick with which to beat the believer, to bring them down, to wound them. When you set out deliberately to upset them, you're being a complete douche-nozzle. Sure, you can say that simply ridiculing a belief will invariably upset those who believe it, but that's *their* problem – it's *their* choice

to be offended – no-one worries about whether slagging off the film career of Elvis Presley is going to upset his fans (they're adults and they should bloody well be able to handle it). But when upsetting people is your goal rather than an unfortunate side-effect of their over-sensitivity then you're being a douche.

God-rejecting blasphemers like myself face a daily barrage of grief from theists over how we're aggressive, militant even, in the way we choose to take on their beliefs, and while there will be a very small minority of annoying dicks in the atheist camp (as there are in any group) who seem incapable of behaving like anything other than a grotty, vile little cock-ferret to the dandelion minds in Team Jesus, the rest of us shouldn't ever apologise for making mockery a weapon of choice in the war against dumb ideas, and we should never allow our delicately emotional friends of the sky pixie persuasion to dishonestly re-brand simple ridicule as abuse or bullying. We have the right to make fun, they have the right not to like it, and we shouldn't make it personal any more than they should cast themselves in the role of victim just for having their opinions mocked.

Right, I'm off to go and taunt some idiots ... I mean, ridicule some ideas ...

It's good to be back ...

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to be 'D.A.' or similar, written in a cursive style.